

NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the meeting on May 11, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:44 pm.

I. ROLL CALL: Present were Commissioners Pam Knox, Christine Barnes, Russ Barrett, Don Wallace, Leslie Matthews, Nathaniel Miller, Jane Pekol, and Laura Hill-Eubanks. Also attending were Nathan Ranker and Laura Ranker.

II. SET/ADJUST AGENDA: Items added to the end of the agenda.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (scheduled):

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 13, 2016 minutes approved 6-0-2.

V. DISCUSSION

a. Coco O'Conner, Northfield Teen Center: Coco did not attend tonight's meeting. Discussion of possible educational projects to work on with the kids at the teen center. Include gardening, and a hike in the Town Forest. Perhaps partner the teens with the Norwich U students to work on the trails grant. Jane, Christine, and Pam will organize. Leslie would be happy to lead a hike focused on plants. Russ would be happy to offer tree information for the kids.

b. Town Forest Stewardship Plan: Arrowwood Environmental consulting is gathering information on seeps, wetlands, and vernal pools in the Town Forest. They intend to file the information with the state and the state will load the information into their database for mapping. Laura will check with the state to see what they need for classification/protection purposes.

Arrowwood would like more feedback from NCC for their draft of the management plan. Discussed as follows:

The trails in the Town Forest were historically and traditionally used for hiking, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing associated with the Norwich ski lifts, and snowshoeing. A good approach would be to keep the Town Forest trails for more traditional and less intense uses such as hiking, especially given that the Norwich trail system is available for more intense uses such as mountain biking. The Town Forest could be kept as a more natural forest setting that could be valuable for conservation and education as well as lower intensity recreation. Having two different user experiences (Norwich multi-use/higher intensity that includes mountain biking, and Town Forest for lower intensity use such as hiking) in close proximity to one another could make the area very unique and attractive to users.

Norwich plans to open up more trails for downhill skiing. The old Lybrand ski trail is being used in the Town Forest and vegetation in other areas is being cut to

accommodate back-country-style downhill skiing. If the Lybrand trail is kept open, will skiers stay on that trail or will they continue to cut more vegetation in the Town Forest? Will need information from Arrowwood as to the impacts this can have. Management will be needed.

NCC will also need more information from Arrowwood as to impacts from camping. Russ encouraged members to look at the Middlesex management plan for the approach they used.

Motorized uses have too many impacts. Hunting has traditionally taken place in the Town Forest and so would continue.

Signs are needed at the property line so users know where the Norwich U/Town Forest boundaries are.

Decisions will have to be made as to intensity of logging and size of areas to be logged. Wildlife impacts have to be given a great deal of consideration.

There was general consensus that information from the Arrowwood natural resource inventory report could help inform final decision making about use recommendations. Pam said she would talk to Arrowwood to clarify what info they need from us in order to finish the report.

c. Forest signage – Nate Ranker: Nathan updated the NCC on his ideas for signage and a map of the main trail in the Town Forest. NCC provided feedback on names for the trail sections. Leslie will check the Green Mountain Club guidebook for the names they used to try and provide some consistency. Leslie asked that Dan Currier at CVRPC send his data used for the mapping.

Educational signs will be installed. Nathaniel and Leslie will edit the text and send the final versions to Nathan. A QR Code will be added for links to NCC webpage that will include rules and restrictions and other information on the trails. The signs must be ordered by the end of May; and Nathan's project completed by July 29.

d. Trail Grant: NCC may have to modify the plans for the footbridges because the VYCC may need more time than they had planned for the project.

e. Conservation Camp – scholarship: NCC will be seeking applications from kids interested in attending conservation camp. Pam will work on that.

f. Solar Projects: Russ looked at some of the school property for solar projects. Jane said other potential solar projects are also being looked at.

g. NCC Officer Elections – Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer: By unanimous votes, the following were elected for the coming year: Pam Knox, Chair; Russ Barrett, Vice-Chair; Leslie Matthews, Treasurer; Jane Pekol, Secretary.

h. National Trails Day: NCC will plan a public hike for June 4th, National Trails Day. Russ will put the announcement together and it will be posted on FPF and the NCC Facebook page.

i. Water Street Park: Don informed the group that Norwich U Geology Department has put a plan together to bring some rocks into the park as part of the park project. More homes that were affected by the flood may be razed in the area of the future park.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):

VII. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Laura Hill-Eubanks, Northfield Conservation Commission.

These minutes are subject to changes and approval at the next regular meeting, but are substantially correct.